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Regionalism and Regional Cooperation in South Asia: Issues and Impediments

Divya Nath

The concept of regionalism is a rather new phenomenon in international politics. Positioned somewhere between the concepts of nationalism and universalism, it is a means of consolidating relations with the countries of a particular geographical area, to preserve and promote their common interests. The end of Cold War and economic rationalization, in the context of a rapidly integrating global economy, have led to this new emphasis on regionalism in the post-Second World War international order. It has become a viable policy alternative among developing countries, as a means of enhancing their bargaining power, at the numerous international level negotiations.

Regionalism

Regional and international cooperation are increasingly emerging as a means to reduce overdependence of the South on the North. The continuing impasse in the North-South economic dialogue has been largely responsible for forging greater South-South cooperation. Needless to say, that South-South cooperation is meant to complement rather than replace North-South interaction. Today, about 120 countries, which account for 82% of world trade, are members of regional trade arrangements of various kinds. The long term goal is to 'demystify development' and to 'humanize the state'.¹

A region is generally known as a cluster of geographically proximate countries that share common historical bonds, cultural and social identities, and economic, political and strategic interests, with a desire to live in harmony and cooperation. From this

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